

Committee on Resources,

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH E. DODDRIDGE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 601, TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED ACCESS OF HUNTERS TO THOSE FEDERAL LANDS INCLUDED WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF IDAHO PURSUANT TO PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION 7373 ON NOVEMBER 9, 2000, AND TO CONTINUE THE APPLICABILITY OF THE TAYLOR GRAZING ACT TO THE DISPOSITION OF GRAZING FEES ARISING FROM THE USE OF SUCH LANDS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MARCH 13, 2001

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 601, a bill to ensure the continued access of hunters to those federal lands included within the boundaries of the Craters of the Moon National Monument in the State of Idaho pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 7373 on November 9, 2000, and to continue the applicability of the Taylor Grazing Act to the disposition of grazing fees arising from the use of such lands, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 601, which would preserve hunting on the NPS-managed portion of the monument expansion.

Craters of the Moon National Monument was established by Proclamation of President Calvin Coolidge in 1924 for the purpose of protecting the unusual landscape of the Craters of the Moon lava field. This unusual landscape was thought to resemble the surface of the Moon and the Proclamation stated that the area "contains many curious and unusual phenomena of great educational value and has a weird and scenic landscape peculiar to itself." Between 1924 and 1962, the monument was expanded and boundary adjustments were made through four presidential proclamations. In 1996, a minor boundary adjustment was made by section 205 of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (110 Stat. 4093; Public Law 104-333). On November 9, 2000, President Clinton's proclamation expanded the 53,440-acre monument by adding approximately 661,287 acres of federal lands.

The expanded monument includes almost all the features of basaltic volcanism, including the craters, cones, lava flows, caves, and fissures of the 65-mile long Great Rift, a geological feature that is comparable to the great rift zones of Iceland and Hawaii. It comprises the most diverse and geologically recent part of the lava terrain that covers the southern Snake River Plain, a broad lava plain made up of innumerable basalt lava flows that erupted during the past 5 million years.

Prior to the recent proclamation, Craters of the Moon National Monument was managed solely by the

National Park Service. The expansion area of the monument, however, consists of lands that had been administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The proclamation gives both agencies responsibilities for administering the monument cooperatively. The National Park Service has the primary management responsibility for the old monument, plus the approximately 400,000-acre portion of the expansion area that consists of exposed lava flows. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for administering the remaining portion of the monument.

The proclamation specified that the NPS portion of the monument expansion is to be managed under the same laws and regulations that applied to the original monument. Since hunting has not been authorized in the original Craters of the Moon National Monument, the effect of the proclamation was to prohibit hunting in the NPS portion of the monument expansion. However, the Department supports a clarification of this language to allow the continued use of the lands in the expanded monument area for hunting. Hunting in the portion of the monument administered by the Bureau of Land Management is not affected.

Furthermore, although the proclamation specifies that the National Park Service has jurisdiction over the exposed lava flows, the on-the-ground reality is that there is not a precise delineation between areas of vegetation and areas of bare rock, making it difficult in many cases to determine the exact location of the boundary. For the average visitor or hunter, it would be difficult, if not impossible to distinguish whether they were on BLM lands or NPS lands, at least in the vicinity of the jurisdictional boundaries.

The Department also recognizes that legislation to provide the authority for hunting within the NPS-managed portion of the monument expansion would give the Superintendent the ability to work cooperatively with the State of Idaho on issues concerning adjacent landowners. For example, hunting could be used as a tool in mitigating agricultural depredation caused by elk grazing on alfalfa crops on privately owned lands outside the monument.

While the Department supports legislation to allow continued hunting in the NPS portion of the Craters of the Moon expansion area, this does not include support for opening to hunting the portion of the monument that existed prior to the proclamation of November 9, 2000. That portion of the national monument has always been, and should continue to be closed to hunting.

In addition, I would like to clarify that the Department's position on this specific issue does not indicate support for opening other areas of the National Park System to hunting.

While the Department supports the intent of H.R. 601 to open the NPS-managed portion of the monument expansion to hunting, we are concerned over the language in section 1(b) that appears to preclude any authority of the Secretary to exercise jurisdiction over the activity. We believe that the Secretary has a role to play, in cooperation with the State, to ensure that hunting is consistent with public safety, area administration, protection of the monument's resources, and public use and enjoyment of the monument. We have attached proposed language for the Committee's consideration that is consistent with similar provisions in laws that authorize hunting in other park areas.

H.R. 601 also requires the Taylor Grazing Act to continue to apply to the disposition of grazing fees arising from use of the expansion area. The Act requires a certain percentage of grazing fees to be returned to the grazing district in which the use occurs. However, since no grazing occurs in the NPS portion of the expansion area and the proclamation does not affect grazing on the BLM portion, we feel this provision is unnecessary.

This concludes my testimony on H.R. 601. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Proposed amendment to H.R. 601

On page 3, strike lines 10 through 16 and insert the following:

"(b) Continued Access for Hunting.---The Secretary shall permit hunting on those portions of Craters of the Moon National Monument that were open to hunting before the issuance of Presidential Proclamation 7373 of November 9, 2000 in accordance with the applicable laws of the United States and the State of Idaho. The Secretary, in consultation with the State, may designate zones where and periods when no hunting may be permitted for reasons of public safety, protection of the monument's resources, area administration, or public use and enjoyment. Except in emergencies, any regulations prescribing such restrictions relating to hunting shall be put in effect only after consultation with the appropriate state agency having jurisdiction over hunting.".

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